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Nancy Blake Letters.

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1864a

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

NANCY BLAKE

LETTERS

TO A

WESTERN COUSIN.

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New York:
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1864.

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NANCY BLAKE LETTERS

TO A

WESTERN COUSIN.

I.

HER ARRIVAL IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

Dear Cousin, I have arrived in this wonderful city,
And, true to my word, I send you this ditty;
But were I to write 'till as blind as our Bill,
Who carries each morning the bag to the mill,
I never could tell the half to be seen—
The houses, the shops, with the people between.
I never could tell of the beauty and size
Of the great shop windows that dazzled my eyes.
I never could tell, for it's not to be told,
How the cart wheels rattled, how the carriages roll'd,

How the streets were filled with the rich and the proud,
Sure never was seen such a wonderful crowd.
Yet, which were the *ton* would have puzzled the brain
Of a head much wiser than mine to explain.
Like grandmama's peacocks, who spread themselves so,
Each one of them seemed to be dressed for a show.
Such satins, such silks, such beautiful laces,
You never got time to look at their faces.
While my thoughts flew back to home and to you—
While the old house clock was striking two—
We arrived at my aunt's in Fifth avenue.
Now, my uncle McAyres, I've heard grandmama say,
Was a tailor, who lived in a very small way.
Much mending he did, with clothes ready made,
Of every description, fashion and shade,
Till that terrible day, which the world well knows,
That valorous day, when the North arose,
For the "Flag" had been struck by Southern foes.
Now, my uncle McAyres was a loyal man,
And his loyal soul was fill'd with a plan—

To serve his country, with a thankful heart,
In his humble way he would act his part.
So they worked and worked, for the need was sore;
All day they worked in my uncle's store,
And made coats for the men that went to the war
By what strange chance I never can tell,
For the coats turned out not quite so well
As the people had hoped, but just in a day
My uncle grew rich in some wonderful way.
While President Lincoln, extending his hand,
Called out in a voice that was heard in the land—
Called out to the people, the loyal and true,
To go forth and fight for the red, white and blue.
In that perilous hour, thro' weakness and shame,
Whatever befell us 'twas ever the same,
Richer and richer my uncle became.
So when he had got both honor and gold
He bought him a house, as I have been told,
Where the quality live, all in a row—
Such wonderful houses, la! what a show.

Indeed, I could scarcely believe my own eyes,
And I thought to myself, as I looked at the size,
If this be the house of my uncle McAyres,
O, what must be that of the Parson's and Mayor's!
So while I was thinking I knocked at the door,
But I might have knocked on 'till my knuckles were sore,
Had not the driver so kindly revealed
The knob at the side, so nicely concealed,
When I gave it a pull, and it opened so quick,
Dear-a-me, it was almost as good as a trick;
When I asked of the help if aunt Betsy was in
(He was black as a coal, though neat as a pin),
He replied, with a smile and a bow so polite,
(It couldn't have been better had he been ever so white),
"That Mrs. McAyres was in, he believed,
But as it was earlier than she ever received,
If I'd walk in the parlor, and wait for a while,
He would take up my name;" and so with a smile
He left me alone, where I wondered a bit
Whether to stand or whether to sit,

Where everything seemed so fine and so frail,
For all the world like an Arabian tale;
But what it was like you never would know,
So if you'll listen awhile I'll endeavor to show.

* * * * *

There's our back-yard, with all its posies,
Holly-hocks and yellow roses—
Of which we have a dreadful sight—
'Tis not so full, nor half so bright
As my aunt's carpet, while each chair
Is quite as grand, I do declare.
And glasses, too, la! what a heap,
'Twas funny just to take a peep,
All shining bright as little lakes,
Or pretty ponds for ducks and drakes.
And some were square, and some were tall,
And all were hanging on the wall;
And pictures, like you see in books,
With houses, trees and little brooks,
But not, it seemed, with country looks;

But then the frames were all so fine,
And like as any gold did shine.
And some were Claude's, my aunt has said,
And that's what makes the sky so red;
So this, I think, is the reason, too,
That makes the grass so dreadful blue.
While in a corner, by themselves,
All nicely piled on little shelves,
Were china boys and china cups,
And little dogs with little pups,
And many things, piled up so high,
You couldn't count them should you try;
And figures, too, all on a post,
Each one as white as any ghost.
Some all alone, some in a row,
Without a stitch from top to toe.
I've often heard our parson say
That city folks would go astray,
And so I thought, without delay,
I'll speak my mind to aunt McAyres—
My notion on such like affairs.

So I settled my gown and tidied my hair,
And sat myself down on the edge of a chair,
Twisting and turning like any live eel,
When a lady came in so grand and genteel,
And taking my hand, with the leetlest shake,
Said: "How do you do, Miss Nancy Blake?"
That this was aunt Betsy, who would have suspected,
Such powerful manners, so cool and collected,
And dressed, I declare, as fine as a fiddle,
In the queerest of gowns, with a slit up the middle.
And, la! such a petticoat, ruffle and lace,
Just showing as plain as the nose on her face—
So while I was looking, with all of my eyes,
I reckon she saw my shame and surprise,
For she called it by name, I blushed as I heard,
A *disable*, or some other finefied word.
Then taking my hat, which I held on my knees,
With a smile, like a pippin, she said would I please
To excuse Miss Jenny, for Mrs. Van Geesen
Had given, last night, the ball of the season,

She had danced each set till it was near on to one,
As the rooms were quite hot she was quite over-done.
La! she needn't have asked, I was in such a fluster,
Not a word in reply had I courage to muster;
And my tongue, which at home so freely can wag,
Seemed tied in my mouth, like a cat in a bag,
While all the fine things which I meant to have said
Just popped in a minute right out of my head.
But when she'd a notion I wanted to dress,
As they dined at five, you may venture to guess
I was struck of a heap, as upside-down
As every thing else in this wonderful town.

II.

SHE GOES TO STEWART'S, BALL & BLACK'S, ETC.

Dear Cousin, my uncle McAyres believes in the war;
He believes the people should be willing to pour
Their blood and their treasure to save this nation,
He believes in the President and the proclamation.
Tho' a busy man, who is full of cares,
Of railroad stocks, contracts and shares,
A loyal man is my uncle, McAyres.
With money to spend, 'tis my uncle's desire
That whatever the fashion and times require,
Gentility, elegance, pleasure or health,
His family should freely partake of his wealth;
Now, mindful of this, my aunt did decide,
As the weather was fine we should go for a ride,
There was shopping to do, and some other chores,
So we reckoned 'twas best to go to the stores.
We tidied ourselves, and quick as a thought
Around to the door the carriage was brought;

O, didn't I stare, 'twas enough, I declare,
For there's nothing on earth that can ever compare
With them two horses, as black as a sloe,
With the harness a-shining as white as the snow,
As uppish and vain of their handsome black coats,
As any two dandies a-sowing their oats.
And then such a carriage, as shining and bright
As grandpapa's boots, when, on Saturday night,
With a piece of a candle he gives them a greasing,
To keep the new leather from cracking and creasing.
And my! such a shape, just like my calash,
Only twenty times bigger, with more of a dash,
With a seat for the driver, whose coat is the same
As is worn by the driver of the Countess McMaime,
For my aunt sent to London on purpose to learn
Her ladyship's mind in this little concern,
And a queer little picture, my aunt pointed out,
But I never can learn what it all is about;
A coat-of-arms, she has said, to let the world know,
In the way of fine deeds, we have something to show.

If put on for a sign, our tailor's is better,
For true as I live there is never a letter.
And I thought to myself, if these Yorkers had known
My aunt, when a girl, before she was grown,
I've heard grandmama say none had her ability
In making up hats for the neighboring gentility.

* * * * *

But while I am prating, these wonders relating,
Jacob, the driver, was quietly waiting,
So we got in the carriage, when, seated at ease,
My aunt drew the blanket up over our knees.
O, la! what an elegant blanket, I cried,
"'Tis an Afghan, Miss Blake," aunt Betsy replied;
"All the people you'll meet—of position, I mean—
Have an Afghan like this of red, yellow and green."

* * * * *

Then Jacob, the driver, he flourished the reins,
The horses they flourished their tails and their manes,
And if you had seen, when we got up our steam,
You'd have thought it a pretty respectable team.

It was pretty to see my cousin, Miss Jenny,
So handsome and trim, so quiet and steady,
The pretty long curls falling over her face,
Like Jacob, the driver, each keeping its place,
Sitting back in the carriage so careless and proud,
It was pretty to see her look down on the crowd.
But I tried all I could to look clever and kind,
So I think it quite likely the crowd didn't mind,
But just at this moment my mind went astray,
For we had entered the street that they call Broadway,
Where the crowd is so thick and the windows so gay,
Where the beautiful women—oh! what a lot—
Were pursuing some wonder, I could not tell what;
Where the brave soldier lads, were fifeing and tooting—
(My aunt and my cousin both called it recruiting)—
While my aunt, with a voice very solemn and clear,
Hoped "the dear people would all Volunteer."
Where nothing was heard but cracking and flashing,
But hurry and worry, and dashing and smashing;
The pavement a-shaking, the horses a-quaking,

'Till my heart and my head were both dizzy and aching;
Where the people went mincing and dancing along,
Not caring a fig for the jostle or throng;
Where all was confusion, and tumult and labor,
Every one for himself, not a soul for his neighbor,
'Till I thought 'twere as easy to ride on a rail
As ever to find the head or the tail;
Where every one seems to be treading a mill,
Like so many horses as blind as our Bill.

* * * * *

But Jacob, the driver, he dropped the reins,
The horses they dropped their tails and their manes,
Like a cow in the clover, we came to a stand
Before a great shop, so white and so grand,
That in all of our town and country thro'
I reckon we have nothing to liken it to.

* * * * *

Here were swarms of people, with clerks for all,
But my aunt, who had stopped for an *Ingin* shawl,
Walked on, followed close by Miss Jenny and I,

To the right nor the left not turning her eye.
While my aunt, in a way very proper and nice,
Was selecting a shawl of a wonderful price—
While I thought of the people, and gazed on the faces,
Whose lines had been cast in such beautiful places,
There came to my side a poor, plain body,
Who looked at my aunt, and whispered—*shoddy.*
Shoddy—what did it mean? I looked at her feet,
Indeed, they were exceedingly proper and neat.
What did it mean? my temper was stirred,
And I thought to myself, I will look for this word
In the nice little book which grandmama bought,
Where the meaning of words is properly taught.
Then we entered the carriage, "Ball & Black" my aunt said,
Jacob, the driver, he nodded his head,
And drew up the Afghan of green, yellow and red.
A moment it seemed, when we came to a stop,
And I stood, with my aunt, in a beautiful shop.
La! what a dazzle—what a power of things—
What charming trinkets—what gay gold rings,

And a wonderful clock where a little bird sings.
And silver teapots, and jewels, and plate,
Such as never was seen in our Prairie State.
Here my aunt Betsy met Mrs. Van Turkey,
Who said she was looking for something *rekerkey*,
While she held up a trinket—la! how it did shine—
My aunt and my cousin both said it was fine.
While Miss Jenny was saying this toy was to deck
Mrs. Van Turkey's symmetrical neck,
The clerk brought a paper—he called it a check—
I looked at the figures, quite struck with alarm,
For, indeed, it was the price of grandpapa's farm;
Then Mrs Van Turkey, instead of her name,
Made a neat little cross, which she said was the same.
While Miss Jenny was buying a trifle or two,
My aunt, Betsy McAyres, quite silently drew
My hand through her arm, and, oh! she has shown
That Mr. Van Turkey is a man to be known.
She whispered the tale, which I heard with a tear,
He has *fed* the poor *soldiers* for more than a year;

May the Lord, who protects us, both waking and sleeping,
Have these good people quite safe in his keeping.

* * * * *

Now, starting for home, we got caught in a muss
With a great yellow coach—they call'd it a buss—
Which went crashing along, quite making a spread,
With a fine *coat-of-arms* as big as my head,
When I took such a fright, that I saw nothing more
'Till Jacob, the driver, drew up to the door.

* * * * *

Before sleeping that night—for relieving my mind—
I looked in my book, but no word could I find
Like the poor body spoke; indeed it is clear
It was a meaningless word that troubled my ear.

III.

SHE GOES TO CHURCH.

Dear Cousin, Miss Jenny's new hat arrived last night,
Such lilacs and roses—purple and white—
Heaped up on the front, put in with a mass
Of little field daisies, peeping up through the grass
So white and so fresh, with the middle so yellow,
Looking just as they came right out of the meadow;
While over the cape were pinned crossways
The leetlest rose-buds, stems and sprays,
Just as you see them climb and roam
Over the lattice in our arbor at home.
With ribbons and laces, la! what a pile,
But my aunt has declared that this is the style.
I reckon I was glad to see that hat,
For, as you must know, it depended on that—
Its arrival at home on Saturday night,
With my aunt's new mantle, trimmed with a sight

Of pleats and ruffles, with a gown that was notched and gored—
Whether we went to the house of the Lord.
The day was fine, it was pleasant to hear
The Sabbath bells ring out so clear;
To see the people who thronged the street,
While the carriage was waiting so proper and neat,
With Jacob, the driver, sitting up on the seat.
As far as the deacons, to our wood-pile—
I reckon we drove the length of a mile,
When Jacob, the driver, at a solemn trot,
Drew up in front of the sacred spot.
You have seen the picture we have at home
Of St. Peter's, that wonderful church at Rome;
This seemed the same to my wondering eyes,
But my aunt has said that it differs in size.
We went in with the crowd. Oh! how my heart beat
At the sound of the music, so solemn and sweet.
While a man went before, in a way very kind,
Opened the door of a pew that was cushioned and lined
With the richest of velvet; but all that I felt

As I watched them, and saw how they silently knelt,
The people that met in this "*Temple* of *Grace*"
(For this, I think is the name of the place)—
The beauty, the fashion, the glitter, the glow
Of the gay colored windows—the style and the show;
The dresses, the laces, the wonderful taste,
The fancy of many, some pretty and chaste;
The garish, the polish, the tinsel and gilding,
The splendor and light of this wonderful building.
And I thought to myself, as I looked upon
These people that dazzled my eyes like the sun,
Nancy Blake! Nancy Blake! sure these are the *ton*.
But where were the poor? For each corner and niche
Seemed crowded and jammed with the happy and rich.
Where was Jacob, the driver? Tho' I looked for his face,
'Twas nowhere to be found in this beautiful place.
Then remembering the day, I attempted to pray,
But the God, whom we worship, seemed farther away
Than in the white church, that arose to my mind,
With no tinsel to please, no seats that were lined;

Where Christ, who took on Him our burden of woe—
The burden of all, the high and the low—
Seems nearer, I think, than in this temple of show.
* * * * *
"Remember the Sabbath, so thou would'st be blest,
Six days shalt thou labor, on this shalt thou rest;
The Lord, who made all things, this commandment hath laid
On thee and thy daughter, thy man-servant and maid."
* * * * *
This was the text, and I grew quite perplexed,
While I looked at my aunt, who, I said, would be vexed
At the orders she left, to be cooking the meat,
With other strange dishes—some wonderful treat
Which Miss Jenny's new beau was invited to eat.
But while I was thinking of all he was teaching—
While my mind grew quite dazed between practice and preaching—
The sermon was ended; we went out with the crowd,
And I thought to myself, have they reverently bowed

At the feet of the Saviour? Have they learned what he
taught,
To be humble and meek? Have they found what they sought?

* * * * *

But the thought of the dinner put my aunt in a worry—
Miss Jenny's new beau gave Miss Jenny a flurry—
So Jacob, the driver, drove home in a hurry.

* * * * *

How that table was spread can never be told,
Such knives and such forks, such silver and gold—
Such china, such glasses, my! how they did shine,
Three kinds of glasses for three kinds of wine—
Blue, yellow and red, three at a plate,
Like the Countess McMaimes when dining in state.
Such salt-cellars of gold, one at a dish—
Such a spoon for the soup—such a knife for the fish.

* * * * *

My uncle, McAyres, he sat at the head,
Junius Brutus Vangeesen, whose father, when dead,
Will leave him three millions of gold, it is said—

Sat in the middle; such poultry and game—
Such dishes of meat, with jellies the same
As are put on the table of the Countess McMaime.
Just one at a time, with some wonderful sauce,
Which my aunt has explained by the name of a course.
Junius Brutus Vangeesen, he chatted with ease,
Miss Jenny she played with her fork and her peas;
'Twas pretty to see her eat one at a time,
While Junius Brutus Vangeesen thought it a crime
To be breaking the Sabbath like the people who ride
In the two-horse cars—while my uncle relied
On the sermon we all had been hearing that day,
To keep the poor people from going astray.

* * * * *

When the dinner was thro' I went down to the cook
To help her a bit. La! 'twas as good as a book
To see Miss Jenny stand up by the table,
Eating her peas right out of the ladle.

IV.

SHE TAKES A RIDE IN CENTRAL PARK—GOES TO THE OPERA—A MARRIAGE.

Dear Cousin, Saturday morn I got up with the lark,
For this is the day when the people of mark
All go to ride in the Central Park.
Junius Brutus Vangeesen he came at three,
Aunt Betsy McAyres she whispered to me,
While he helped Miss Jenny get into the carriage,
That "Junius Brutus Vangeesen had hinted at marriage."
Aunt Betsy McAyres and I sat together,
Junius Brutus Vangeesen he talked of the weather.
He said: "The organ of the new Prima Donna
Reflected all possible credit and honor
On manager Gro—a verra good fellah."
Miss Jenny she said "it was exceedingly mellow,"
While she played with the Afghan of red, green and yellow.
Now, when we got there, it was a sight to behold,
For all the gentry—the young and the old—

Dressed in the way that can never be told,
Had arrived on the spot—then the lawns and ridges,
The ponds of water, and O! the bridges,
With plenty of land to be walking around.
But alack! there is only one place to be found
Where the quality drive; so we twisted about,
But how we got in or how we got out
Of that beautiful place where the quality go,
Jacob, the driver, only can know.
Soon Miss Jenny looked up, and pointed her glove,
Junius Brutus Vangeesen—who being in love,
As was proper and right—then pointed his hand,
My aunt Betsy McAyres she whispered, "the band"—
Then Miss Jenny declared "'twas the dear Traviata."
O, I listened, and listened—la! what was the matter,
No thing could I hear but the noise and the clatter
Now, while I was thinking—as I looked at the crowd—
That these Yorkers did speak uncommonly loud,
Whom should we meet, just face unto face,
But Mrs. Van Turkey, all feathers and lace?

While riding behind came the rich Mrs. Toodle,
Who was sitting alone with Bijou the poodle—
Who spoke to Miss Jenny, just saying, indeed,
"That when Bijou had pups they would be a rare breed?"
And who promised to send, when the creature got thro',
"One to my aunt's in Fifth Avenue."
Then the rich Mrs. Toodle "declared it was horrid
To see Mrs. Plimpton, whose face was so florid,
And she thought for a fact that the creature had done it,
When she put on her head that *rujanore* bonnet."
Then the rich Mrs. Toodle asked "what was the news?"
While she wondered, indeed, to see all the Jews.
"Did we like Mrs. O'Grady's very loud manner?
Ah! there goes the band at the Star Spangled Banner."
While I listened to all with admiring awe,
Junius Brutus Vangeesen said "the tune was a baw."
Then the rich Mrs. Toodle passed out of our sight,
But I saw Mrs. Plimpton, whose face had grown white—
Whose horses, they said, had just taken fright.
O, I felt in my mind quite ready to sink,

La! I said to myself, what would grandmama think?
But just at this moment, riding in haste,
There came a young man of uncommon taste,
Who wore a long coat with a very short waist.
My aunt Bessy she said: "'Twas not very clear
How he kept that fine horse on six hundred a year."
Now he bowed to Miss Jenny—"Had she happened to hear
That Mr. McPherson, a man for the times—
Abused by the world for a few petty crimes—
Was going to marry?" "Indeed, are you sure?
I thought the good creature was horridly poor."
Then this very young man bowed again to Miss Jenny,
"He has a contract, you know, and is making a penny;
Indeed, I am told, and can give it as true,
He has bought him a house in Fifth Avenue."
Then he patted his horse, which bore him away,
While Junius Brutus Vangeesen said: "We must not delay,
For this was the night to go to the play."

* * * * *

'Twas an opera night, we went into the pit,
For there's where the style and the quality sit.
My aunt Betsy McAyres wore a beautiful gown,
A moire antique of crimson and brown,
With wonderful jewels of red and white,
For my aunt McAyres says it is right
For the people to dress on an opera night.
Miss Jenny was clothed in royal stuff—
Like the Empress wears—of purple and buff,
With ribbons, and laces, and jewels of blue,
Junius Brutus Vangeesen said "she would do."
Now, my aunt and Miss Jenny, whose taste is complete,
Said: "Tho' my old gowns were pretty and neat,
They were not exactly the sort of affairs
To be worn by the niece of Patrick McAyres."
So, alack! I was dressed in an elegant red,
With real lace for my neck and a wreath for my head—
With very white gloves—the best that are sold—
With gorgeous bracelets of amber and gold.
But I tried not to think of my elegant clothes,

My aunt Betsy had said I must study repose.
So I looked at the people, who were seated in rows—
Who chatted and laughed, and kept twitching their fans,
Stamping their feet and clapping their hands
'Till the curtain went up. Now, I would never engage
To tell all they did on that wearisome stage,
But unto my mind the case is quite plain,
Than when folks have sorrow, and trouble and pain,
They never do sing in that rollicking strain.
Then I tried to have patience, for this was the night
That good Mr. Gro, to the people's delight,
Was to bring out a *bally*. Alas! 'twas but a heathenish name
For a thing that was naught but a sin and a shame.
I blushed when they talked of "the beauty and grace"—
I saw not, indeed—it was in turning my face
Quite around, that the people should every one know
That I did not approve of this indecent show.
When close to my ear, what word should I hear
But "*shoddy*" again—'twas monstrous queer.
Shoddy—I grew quite sick of "an opera night"—

Of my elegant clothes and the blazing light,
And yearned for my home, with a silent prayer—
For the old hearthstone and the faces there.
Shoddy—ask grandmama, pray,
If it is anything wonderfully out of the way?

* * * * *

Miss Jenny is married, in splendor and worth,
My cousin's *trosso* was a wonder on earth,
From the ring on her finger to the white silk gown
I reckon it made a talk in the town.
The house of the Lord, and even the street
Was crowded and jammed with the great *ailee*t,
No space to sit, nor even to stand,
'Tis said "the affair was exceedingly grand."
I reckon my uncle McAyres was proud
To be followed quite home by that beautiful crowd,
Who chatted and laughed—who partook of the feast—
Who looked at the presents—ah! the cost of the least
Would keep, I am thinking (I may whisper it here),
A poor family in bread for more than a year.

But a few of these elegant things, I am told—
These gorgeous sets of silver and gold
Are hired from shops—brought home for a day—
For it is in a wedding, my aunt does say,
That the great *aileet* must make a display.
Now, the bride and the groom have taken a notion
To run for a *toor* across the ocean.
They will go 'till they see all that's to be seen,
The amphitheatre and the English queen;
The volcanos, the rivers, and all of the mountains,
The parks, the gardens, and all of the fountains;
Then to St. Peter's church, just to look at the dome,
So tell grandmama, please, I will not be home
'Till Mrs. Vangeesen returns from Rome.

SHODDY!

In sackcloth and ashes, bowed down to the ground,
This terrible word, with its meaning, I've found.
Do you know, what it is, who careless and gay,
Are walking the streets of your city to-day?
Do you know, what it is, who hold in your hand
Some anchor of trust in a storm-driven land?
Do you know, what it is, wherever you dwell,
In city, in town, in village or dell?
Have you found out this word? Have you pondered it well?
Afloat on the river—the mad river of war—
In a ship that is freighted with a god-given store
Of memories and hopes, all you cherish on earth,
Your country, your honor, your treasures of worth.
Afloat on a river, whose billows run red
With the lives of the million, whose blood hath been shed

That you may be saved, while close by their side,
Hand grasping the hand that is stemming the tide,
Brave words on his tongue, a smile on his lip,
Stands Shoddy, the man who is scuttling your ship.
Come out from your sloth, wake up to the hour—
Come out 'neath the skies, where the battle-clouds lower,
Come out where the voice of the trumpet is calling,
Where brave men by thousands and thousands are falling—
Where, trusting in God, working up to the goal
(Thro' days which are leaving their print on the soul),
See the men of the battle facing the foe,
See, behind them, a hand with a deadlier blow
Aimed at their lives—reckless and bold—
It is Shoddy, the *patriot*, doubling his gold.

Come on, through this path, repulsive and vile,
Where frown the dark shadows of gloomy Belle Isle;
No gleaming of light—no high-road of flowers,
Where disease and starvation but vary the hours.
Ay! daily to you hath the story been told,

While Shoddy at home is still doubling his gold—
Gold that is coined in the costliest mint—
Gold that bears on its face a terrible print,
The tears of the widow, the wail and the sighing
Of poor broken hearts—the groans of the dying.
He is piling them up, fresh from the mold—
He is turning his wares into glittering gold.
He traffics—this man—in a fanciful mart,
Every day he brings home, in his close-covered cart,
The hope of a patriot, the life-blood of a heart.
In the dead of the night, when no spirit is near,
Does not the chink of that gold give back to his ear
The last note of the dirge, the groan and the tear?

Let no smile wreath your lip when shoddy is spoken,
Be it ever to you a sign and a token
Of hopes that were crushed, of hearts that are broken.
Let no woman that's pure, in this beautiful land,
Pass over this crime, or hold forth her hand
To the man or the woman defiled by this brand.

God's curse is upon it—lo! the angels above,
Who are keeping o'er earth their vigils of love,
Start back in affright whenever is heard,
In the kingdom of light, this terrible word.
With no *humor* attached to cover its name,
The tears of the angels cannot blot out its shame.

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